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ABSTRACT

A study examined existing perceptions of the effectiveness of vocational education in Michigan. Researchers sought the opinions of 1,879 educators (including teachers, administrators, counselors, admissions representatives, and public relations professionals) connected with vocational education; 1,099 nonvocational educators; 745 parents; 1,030 students and graduates; and 5,050 business representatives. Responses were received from 535 vocational and 225 nonvocational educators, 56 parents, 218 students and graduates, and 298 business representatives. The respondents generally felt that vocational education in Michigan offers a good program to train young people in a wide variety of skills necessary for at least an entry-level job. They did, however, have some concerns about the program's ability to provide long-term career skills and the effect that enrollment in vocational education might have on students' chances of being admitted to college. Most respondents did not believe that the majority of students use vocational education principally as a means of having an easier academic program. Business representatives, counselors, and nonvocational educators had more reservations about vocational education than did students. Parents, counselors, and vocational students were the primary persons influencing students' decisions to enroll in vocational education, and the respondents generally agreed that counselors, teachers, and brochures are the best sources of information about vocational education. (MN)

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SURVEY ON  
THE STATUS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
IN MICHIGAN

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&

Wayne County  
Intermediate School District

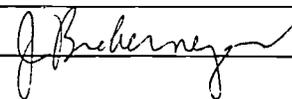
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# Survey on the Status of Vocational Education

Prepared by:

Anthony M. Franco, Inc. and

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## INTRODUCTION

In January, 1986, Anthony M. Franco, Incorporated (AMF, Inc.) and the Wayne County Intermediate School District (WCISD) completed a survey on the status of vocational education in the state of Michigan. The purpose of the survey was to determine:

- \* Perceptions of vocational education
- \* Opinions about vocational education's effectiveness
- \* Familiarity with vocational education
- \* Motivations for enrolling in vocational education

Questionnaires were developed by AMF, Inc. and WCISD to determine opinions of (1) educators directly connected with vocational education, (2) educators not directly connected with the curriculum, (3) parents of vocational education students and graduates, (4) the students themselves, and (5) businesses. The questionnaires were mailed in November to 1,879 educators connected with vocational education (including administrators, teachers, high school counselors, occupational education deans and teachers, and community college counselors, admissions representatives, and public relations professionals), 1,099 non-vocational educators (including junior and senior high school teachers, community college teachers, and junior and senior high school principals), 745 parents, 1,030 students and graduates, and 5,050 business representatives selected from across the state.

The total response from each group was: 535 vocational educators, 225

non-vocational educators, 56 parents, 218 students and graduates, and 298 business representatives. The samples of all groups except parents are sufficient to project valid observations for the total universe. However, the sample of parents can provide only preliminary findings which might not accurately reflect the opinions of the entire universe. Furthermore, some of the subgroups within the larger groups are insufficient (i.e., smaller than 50) to permit drawing valid conclusions about the opinions of those subgroups.

The survey results and our recommendations based on those findings are detailed in the following pages. The analysis divides the survey questions into these areas:

- \* Evaluation of Vocational Education
- \* Perceptions of Vocational Education
- \* Benefits and Drawbacks
- \* Motivations for Enrolling in Vocational Education
- \* Sources of Information
- \* Promotion of Vocational Education
- \* Familiarity with Vocational Education
- \* Role of State Government

The term "mean" used in the analysis refers to the average response on a scale of values. The mean was calculated by assigning a value of 1 to the first item (e.g., excellent), a value of 2 to the second item (e.g., good), and so on. The number of responses for each item was multiplied by the assigned value, and the sum total for all the items was divided by the total number of responses for that question.

The percentages refer to the respondents who answered a particular question, rather than all respondents in a particular group. However, it should be noted that the number of non-respondents to any one question is very low.

The analysis differentiates responses by subgroups only when those responses are significant.

## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF SURVEY FINDINGS

### SUMMARY

The respondents think that vocational education in Michigan offers a good program to train young people in a wide variety of skills necessary to obtain at least an entry-level job, and not just a low-level or unskilled job, and to improve the students' earning potential. They have some concerns, however, about the program's ability to provide long-term career skills. They also worry that enrollment in the program could limit students' exposure to academic subjects and jeopardize a young person's chances of being admitted to college. On the other hand, the respondents as a whole don't believe that most students see vocational education principally as a means to gain an easier academic program.

Despite the respondents' generally favorable opinion of vocational education, they believe that others do not share that evaluation. Most think, for example, that the general public has some misgivings about the program. In addition, the educator and student respondents suspect that their peers have lower opinions about the program.

Furthermore, some groups of respondents consistently express some doubts about vocational education, notably the business respondents, the counselors, and the non-vocational educators (especially the senior high school teachers and the junior high school principals). By contrast, the students gen-

erally offer the highest assessment of the program.

The respondents rate parents, counselors, and vocational education students the primary influences on a student considering enrollment in vocational education. The educator respondents believe that counselors, vocational education teachers and administrators, teachers in general, and business, industry, and labor representatives should be playing a more influential role, both in encouraging individual young people to enroll in vocational education and promoting the program in general. Finally, the respondents generally agree that counselors, teachers, and brochures are the best sources of information about vocational education.

## ANALYSIS

### Evaluation of Vocational Education

The respondents on the whole think that vocational education in Michigan is good, but the business respondents express the lowest opinion.

Table 1

### Respondents' Evaluation of Vocational Education

<u>Voc. Educators</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Non-Voc. Educators</u>	<u>Businesses</u>
2.0	2.0	1.6	2.2	2.4

1= Excellent, 2= Good, 3= Fair, 4= Poor

The students have the highest opinion: almost half of them (44 percent) rate vocational education excellent. At the other extreme, nearly half of the business respondents (42 percent) rate vocational education fair or poor.

**The respondents think that the general public has a lower opinion of vocational education than do the respondents themselves: just above fair.**

**Table 2**

**Respondents' Evaluation of General Public Opinion**

<u>Voc. Educators</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Non-Voc. Educators</u>	<u>Businesses</u>
2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.7

1 = Excellent, 2 = Good, 3 = Fair, 4 = Poor

Nearly half of each group of educators, over half (59 percent) of the business respondents, and over a third (36 percent) of the parent respondents believe that the general public rates vocational education only fair or poor. By contrast, 82 percent of the student respondents think that the general public rates vocational education excellent or good. Thus, again the students express a higher opinion of vocational education than do the other groups, while the business respondents express the lowest opinion.

**In addition, both sets of educator respondents assess their col-**

leagues' opinion as somewhat lower than their own.

**Table 3**

**Educators' Evaluation of Colleagues' Opinion**

<u>Vocational Educators</u>	<u>Non-Vocational Educators</u>
2.3	2.5

1= Excellent, 2= Good, 3= Fair, 4= Poor

The mean rating by vocational educators is 2.3 (as compared with a mean of 2.0 for the respondents' own opinion), and 39 percent of them think their colleagues would rate vocational education only fair or poor (as compared with only 20 percent of the respondents who would have a similarly low opinion themselves). The mean for non-vocational educators is 2.5 (as compared with 2.2 for the respondents' own view), and nearly half (47 percent) assess their colleagues' evaluation as only fair or poor (as compared with only one-fourth of these respondents who express such a low assessment themselves). It is also significant that here again the vocational educators demonstrate a higher opinion of vocational education than the non-vocational educators.

Although the subgroups in each educator group are in substantial agreement about their own evaluations and those of other people, two trends should be noted. The counselors consistently express the lowest opinion of vocational

education of all the respondents in the vocational educator group, and the senior high school principals express the highest opinion of the respondents in the non-vocational educator group.

**On the whole, the respondents think well of vocational education, but they believe that the view of most people (including both the general public and educators in general) may be significantly lower.**

#### Perceptions of Vocational Education

**The respondents generally agree that vocational education trains students in a wide variety of skills needed by today's job market, but they are less convinced about the program's flexibility in enabling students to concurrently pursue college preparatory courses.**

**Table 4****Perceptions About Vocational Education**

	<u>Voc. Eds.</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>		<u>Non-Voc. Eds.</u>	<u>Businesses</u>
			<u>Bef.</u>	<u>Aft.</u>		
Training for wide variety of skills	2.1	2.3	1.8	1.6	2.5	2.6
Training for low-level, unskilled jobs	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.2	2.9
Training plus college prep	2.7	2.6	2.0	1.9	3.0	2.8
Training for non-academically talented	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.0	2.1
Training for no marketable skills	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.2	3.9

1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4= Disagree, 5= Strongly Disagree

The average mean rating of around 2.0 for the statement about vocational education's providing training in a wide variety of essential skills demonstrates that most respondents agree with that statement. However, once again the business respondents have the least confidence; in fact, almost one-fourth (22 percent) of them disagree with that statement, and the mean of 2.6 swings the group as a whole toward a neutral position. On the other hand, the students express the greatest affirmation of vocational education in this area: 89 percent say that they held that opinion before they enrolled in vocational educa-

tion, while almost all of them (94 percent) can say so after participating in the program.

The counselors, senior high school teachers, and junior high school principals express some reservations about vocational education's adequacy in this area. The mean for the counselor respondents is 2.4 (as compared with 2.1 for the vocational educator group as a whole), and 21 percent of the counselors disagree that vocational education does provide training in a wide variety of marketable skills. Similarly, the senior high school teachers offer a mean of 2.5, and 21 percent of them disagree with the statement. The junior high school principals offer the harshest assessment: a mean of 2.7 with 28 percent disagreeing with the statement.

**Thus, although the respondents as a whole would agree that vocational education generally meets its goal of providing training in a wide variety of skills, many respondents are not so convinced, notably the counselors and business representatives whose support is needed.**

**On the positive side, most respondents do not believe that vocational education prepares young people only for low-level and unskilled jobs or that the training produces no marketable skills.**

Means of greater than 3.0 indicate that most respondents disagree with the assessment that vocational education emphasizes menial jobs, but a significant

number of each group agrees with that view: 26 percent of the vocational educators (notably, 29 percent of the counselors and 28 percent of the teachers), 32 percent of the parents, 25 percent of the students, 31 percent of the non-vocational educators, and 42 percent of the business respondents. Thus, it appears that this misconception about vocational education still lingers in the minds of many people, including those who should have the most information. The fact that nearly half of the business respondents hold this misconception indicates a need to upgrade the image of the program if businesses are to seriously consider graduates for more than just low-level, unskilled jobs.

However, few respondents would judge vocational education so harshly as to believe that it offers no valuable vocational training whatsoever, as revealed by means of 4.0 or higher. Even the normally critical business respondents acknowledge that such a charge is unfounded, according to over three-fourths (77 percent) of them.

**On the negative side, many respondents do not believe that a student could pursue college preparation courses while enrolled in vocational education.** Although means ranging from 1.9 for students (after they enrolled in the program) to 2.8 for business respondents indicate some agreement or at least a willingness to take a neutral stance, substantial numbers of respondents are not so confident. Especially significant is the fact that 38 percent of the counselors (who are in a position to recommend vocational

education to students) and 30 percent of the vocational education teachers themselves are not convinced that the two curricula can be handled simultaneously. And, in line with their generally low assessments of the program witnessed previously, 42 percent of the senior high school teachers and 51 percent of the junior high school principals do not believe that students can participate in both curricula. Thus, educators, both those involved in the program and those not, may need to be better informed on how students can realistically pursue a college preparatory program while enrolled in vocational education.

**Furthermore, the fact that most respondents believe that vocational education is a viable option for students who are not academically talented suggests that the program is still perceived as the last resort for below-average students.** Some 80 percent of each group, except the students, agrees with that view. Fifty-nine percent of the students say that they held that view before entering the program, and only a slightly higher percentage (66 percent) feel that way after participating. Thus, again the students express the most positive view of vocational education.

**Both educator groups and the student respondents think that their peers may have a lower opinion of vocational education than they themselves do.**

**Table 5**  
**Peers' Perceptions About Vocational Education**

	<u>Voc. Ed.</u> <u>Colleagues</u>	<u>Resps.</u>	<u>Non-Voc. Ed.</u> <u>Colleagues</u>	<u>Resps.</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Resps.</u>
Training for wide variety of skills	2.5	2.1	2.6	2.5	1.9	1.6
Training for low-level, unskilled jobs	2.8	3.4	2.8	3.2	3.3	3.5
Training plus college prep	3.1	2.7	3.2	3.0	2.1	1.9
Training for non-academically talented	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.0	2.5	2.4
Training for no marketable skills	3.9	4.5	3.9	4.2	3.8	4.2

1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4= Disagree, 5= Strongly Disagree

Note: the first, third, and fifth columns represent the respondents' beliefs about their peers' perceptions, while the second, fourth, and sixth columns represent the views of the respondents themselves.

**The biggest gaps occur for the statements relating to the worth of the program in terms of vocational preparation.** According to these three groups of respondents, their peers are most likely to have some misgivings about whether the program does offer training in a wide variety of marketable skills and to believe that the emphasis is primarily on low-level, unskilled jobs.

The feeling that the respondents' peers may hold a lower assessment of vocational education than the respondents themselves is especially significant for the vocational educator and student groups. Such a belief could affect the individual's self-esteem for being associated with a program that one's peers may undervalue. This could, in turn, dissuade knowledgeable people from recommending the program and potential candidates from enrolling.

**The parent, non-vocational educator, and business respondents**

reveal that they still think of vocational education primarily as a training ground for mechanics, industrial trade workers, and clerical personnel. Thus, these groups of respondents, who are not as familiar with vocational education as are the students and the vocational educators, reveal that they cling to a very limited and stereotyped perception of the occupational fields for which students can receive training. This finding is significant because it indicates a tendency by the general public to equate vocational education strictly with "the trades."

**Table 6**

**Perceptions About Occupational Fields Associated with Vocational Education**

	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Non-Voc. Eds.</u>		<u>Businesses</u>	
	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>
Mechanical	28%	22%	27%	21%	34%	22%
Clerical work	11%	7%	18%	16%	13%	11%
Trade and industrial (e.g., plumber, electrician)	7%	11%	11%	9%	13%	13%
Personal services	11%	4%	2%	4%	2%	2%
Health	11%	7%	5%	3%	4%	6%
Machine shop (e.g., welding, tool and die making)	9%	7%	9%	11%	15%	11%
Computer work	2%	11%	5%	2%	4%	7%

Benefits and Drawbacks

The respondents are confident that vocational education is generally effective in providing students with entry-level job skills and improving their earning potential, but most are skeptical about the program's ability to provide long-term career skills.

**Table 7**  
**Benefits of Vocational Education**

	<u>Voc. Eds.</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Non-Voc. Eds.</u>	<u>Businesses</u>
Providing entry-level skills	2.0	2.1	1.6	2.2	2.3
Providing long-term career skills	2.4	2.1	1.7	2.6	2.5
Providing base for further education	1.9	2.1	1.6	2.3	2.3
Improving graduate's earning potential	1.9	2.0	1.6	2.1	2.2
Offering source of income while going to college	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.7	2.7
Improving science and math skills	2.6	2.5	2.3	3.0	2.9
Improving communications/language skills	2.5	2.4	2.0	2.9	2.9

1= Always, 2= Frequently, 3= Occasionally, 4= Never

Most respondents acknowledge that vocational education is effective in training students in entry-level job skills at least frequently (as indicated by the means of about 2.0 for each group). In fact, only six respondents altogether believe that this never happens. Furthermore, over half (51 percent) of the students claim that this goal is always achieved. However, 40 percent of the junior high school principals and 32 percent of the business respondents think that this goal is achieved only occasionally. On the whole, though, the respondents think that vocational education is fulfilling its primary function.

Along the same lines, the respondents believe that vocational education helps students improve their earning potential at least frequently, again reflected in means of around 2.0 across the board. In this case 23 percent of the vocational educator and parent respondents and 55 percent of the students think that this goal is always achieved. Some respondents are not so confident,

however: 39 percent of the junior high principals and 32 percent of the business respondents believe that this benefit is realized at best only occasionally. Still, the respondents on the whole believe that the program offers students some financial benefit.

The respondents are not convinced, however, of vocational education's ability to achieve more long-range benefits. Many respondents, for one thing, do not see that the program provides the opportunity to develop long-term career skills often enough. The most critical are the educator and business groups: 38 percent of the vocational educator respondents and over 50 percent of the non-vocational educator and business respondents believe that vocational education succeeds in providing such long-term skills only occasionally or never. In fact, 58 percent of the counselors, 57 percent of the senior high teachers, and 64 percent of the junior high principals (three subgroups of respondents that have been fairly critical of vocational education elsewhere in the survey) see the program as achieving this goal at best only occasionally. Thus, even though 70 percent of the parents and 86 percent of the students think that vocational education provides long-term career skills at least frequently, the majority of the respondents have some doubts about how often this desired benefit is achieved.

**The respondents also do not believe that very many vocational students are able to use their training to support themselves while going to college.** Again, the most dubious groups are the non-vocational educators and the business respondents. Some two-thirds of each group thinks that this happens only occasionally or never. In fact, even the generally more positive vocational educators and parents express some doubts: 34 percent of the former and 48 percent of the latter think that this benefit is realized only occasionally or never. Only the student respondents continue to voice support for the program: 28 percent believe that this goal is always met, and another 44 percent think that it happens frequently. Thus, the respondents as a whole

reinforce their earlier expressed belief that students probably have difficulty tackling both vocational and college preparatory curricula.

**It may seem paradoxical, then, that the respondents think that vocational education serves as a base for further education at least frequently.** In fact, about a fourth of the vocational educator and parent groups and over half of the student respondents are confident that this is al-  
ways true. Furthermore, about two-thirds of the non-vocational educator and business groups admit that this goal is probably met at least frequently.

Such seemingly contradictory responses may relate to the respondents' perception of vocational education as a viable option for the non-academically talented student. **Thus, they apparently think that vocational education may not provide enough academic education.**

**That assumption is borne out by the respondents' negative reaction to the possibility that vocational education offers students a chance to improve math, science, and communications/language skills.** Only the normally positive students think that such a goal is achieved even frequently. By contrast, over half of the vocational educator and parent groups and about three-fourths of the non-vocational educator and business groups believe that this benefit is realized at best only occasionally.

**Most respondents think that vocational education is moderately effective in training students in the skills necessary to succeed in a job. However, the business respondents would like to see the program doing a better job of supplying a sufficient number of adequately trained workers to meet their work force needs.**

**Table 8**

**Effectiveness of Vocational Education**

<u>Voc. Educators</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Non-Voc. Educators</u>	<u>Businesses</u>
1.6	1.5	1.6	1.8	2.3

1= Very Effective, 2= Somewhat Effective, 3= Not Effective

While few respondents would classify vocational education as ineffective in training students to succeed in the work place, most consider the program just somewhat effective. Even the students split on this issue, with 48 percent rating vocational education very effective, and 47 percent calling it only somewhat effective. Counselors and non-vocational educators voice the gravest concern: over two-thirds (69 percent) of the former and almost three-fourths (71 percent) of the latter believe that the program is only somewhat effective. Thus, the respondents raise some questions about a fundamental aspect of vocational education: its ability to help students succeed in the working world. This response squares with the respondents' previous doubts about the program's ability to provide more than just entry-level skills.

Even more significant is the business respondents' criticism. At best, just over half (52 percent) of them say that the program is somewhat effective in supplying enough adequately trained workers to meet their needs. However, over a third (37 percent) consider the program not effective. Thus, these very important respondents are expressing some doubts about the quality of vocational education graduates.

**Despite the business respondents' reservations about the number of adequately trained vocational graduates, these respondents do acknowledge that the graduates compare favorably with other employees.** Means of greater than 3.0 indicate that the business respondents rate their employees who are vocational education graduates as slightly better than the average employee.

**Table 9**

**Comparison of Vocational Education Graduates With Other Employees**

<u>Job Skills</u>	<u>Punctuality</u>	<u>Appearance</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Willing to Learn</u>	<u>Enthusiasm</u>
2.6	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.5	2.6

1= Superior, 2= Above Average, 3= Average, 4= Below Average, 5= Poor

Particularly noteworthy are the ratings for job skills, willingness to learn, and enthusiasm. These strong ratings indicate respect not only for the graduates' competence but also for their positive attitude toward the job. Thus, the business respondents who have hired vocational education graduates have respect for their credentials and performance.

**The student respondents provide further tribute to the effectiveness of vocational education in their high rating of the instruction.** They offer a mean of 1.4 (on a four-point scale where 1 is excellent, 2 good, 3 fair, and 4 poor). Even more significant is the fact that almost two-thirds (63 percent) of the students rate the instruction excellent.

**The respondents do not see any of the suggested drawbacks as very significant deterrents to enrollment in vocational education, but they generally agree that the reduced time for academic subjects would be the most serious.**

**Table 10**  
**Drawbacks of Vocational Education**

	<u>Voc. Eds.</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Non-Voc. Eds.</u>
Having to travel to another location	1.8	2.4	2.5	1.8
Additional time required	1.9	2.6	2.3	1.9
Less time for academic subjects	1.7	2.4	2.3	1.8
Limited extracurricular involvement	2.1	2.5	2.4	2.2
Limited amount of college preparation courses	1.9	2.4	2.2	1.9
Negative image of vocational education	1.8	2.6	2.5	2.2

1= Very Significant, 2= Somewhat Significant, 3= Not Significant

As might be expected, both groups of educators are most concerned about the possibility of reducing the vocational education students' exposure to academic subjects. In fact, 43 percent of the vocational educators and 34 percent of the non-vocational educators see this as a very significant drawback.

The parent and student respondents are less concerned about limited academic contact, since about half of them rate it not significant, but they still place it at the top of the list of potential drawbacks. However, these respondents recognize that enrollment in vocational education could limit the number of college preparation courses a student could take. Over half of each group rates this latter issue at least somewhat significant. Thus, the parent and student respondents are concerned about the academic implications of enrollment in vocational education, but they do not see this concern as a major deterrent.

**In fact, the student and parent respondents in general do not see any of the possible drawbacks as significant as the educator groups might think.** Thus, the educators may be worrying more about possible negative aspects of the program than they need to. For example, about a third of each educator group rates the travel issue as a very significant drawback. However, only 18 percent of the parents and 13 percent of the students share that opinion.

**Especially significant is the respondents' lack of concern about the negative image of vocational education.** About two-thirds of the students and parents and over a third of the non-vocational educators rate that image an insignificant drawback. By contrast, over a third of the vocational educators think that this would be a very significant deterrent. Thus, the vocational educators are more sensitive to this issue than is apparently necessary.

#### Motivations for Enrolling in Vocational Education

**The respondents generally agree that students enroll in vocational education primarily to acquire entry-level job skills and im-**

**tional education primarily to acquire entry-level job skills and improve earning potential.** In fact, well over half of each group of respondents considers these to be very important reasons. This response is significant since the respondents previously said that they thought that vocational education is generally effective in providing these benefits. Thus, the respondents think that students are getting what they most desire.

**Table 11**  
**Reasons Students Enroll in Vocational Education**

	<u>Voc. Eds.</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Non-Voc Eds.</u>
Acquiring entry-level job skills	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.3
Acquiring long-term career skills	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.7
Gaining base for further education	1.8	1.6	1.3	2.1
Easier program	NA	2.6	2.6	NA
Improving earning potential	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.4
Gaining a source of income while going to college	2.0	2.1	1.7	2.2
Alternative to dropping out	NA	2.5	2.5	NA
Improving science and math skills	2.6	2.4	2.0	2.6
Improving communications/language skills	2.5	2.2	1.7	2.6
Reducing academic requirements	2.0	2.5	2.5	1.9
Earning enough credits for graduation	1.5	2.3	2.0	1.6

1= Very Important, 2= Somewhat Important, 3= Not Important

**Most respondents also see the desire to develop long-term career skills and to further one's education as reasons for choosing vocational education.** The student and parent respondents are the most adamant about the motivation to acquire long-term skills: about two-thirds of the parent and three-fourths of the student respondents say that students consider this a very important reason to enroll in the program. By contrast, less than half of the educator groups share that opinion. Similarly, over half of the parent respondents and nearly three-fourths of the students believe that furthering one's education is a very important reason for students to enroll in vocational education, while only a third of the vocational educators and 17 percent of the non-vocational agree. These responses are significant since only the student respondents previously indicated their belief that vocational education regularly offers long-term career skills and a base for further education.

**The parents and students disagree with the educators that students see vocational education as a way to ease academic requirements.** Well over half of the student and parent respondents believe that students view the possibility of reducing requirements as an unimportant reason to enroll in vocational education, whereas about three-fourths of the two educator groups suspect that students would consider this at least a somewhat important motivation. Similarly, over half (53 percent) of the parent respondents and 40 percent of the students do not believe that students see vocational education as simply a means to earn enough credits toward graduation, while over half of each group of educators thinks that students regard this as a very important reason to enroll in the program. Furthermore, about two-thirds of the parents and students classify a desire for an easier program and the choice of an alternative to dropping out as among the least important reasons for selecting vocational education. Thus, the educators may be mistakenly assuming that vocational students are motivated by a desire to minimize their academic workload.

**Only the students think that improvement of math, science, and communications/language skills could be viewed as important reasons to enroll in vocational education. This reaction squares with the previously recorded view of most respondents that the development of such skills is not a routine benefit of vocational education. In addition, we see the student respondents' consistent desire to view their program in the best light.**

**Most respondents believe that students should enroll in vocational education for the very reasons the respondents think are predominant now: acquiring entry-level and long-term career skills, improving earning potential, and gaining a base for further education.**

**Table 12**

**Reasons Students Should Enroll in Vocational Education**

	<u>Voc. Eds.</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Non-Voc. Eds.</u>
Acquiring entry-level job skills	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.2
Acquiring long-term career skills	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3
Gaining base for further education	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.4
Easier program	NA	2.6	2.4	NA
Improving earning potential	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.4
Gaining a source of income while going to college	1.5	1.7	1.6	2.0
Alternative to dropping out	NA	1.9	2.3	NA
Improving science and math skills	1.6	1.8	1.9	1.8
Improving communications/language skills	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.8
Reducing academic requirements	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.6
Earning enough credits for graduation	2.1	2.0	1.8	2.2

1= Very Important, 2= Somewhat Important, 3= Not Important

The vast majority of each group (at least three-fourths) believes that students should consider the pursuit of entry-level job skills and long-term career skills very important reasons for enrolling in vocational education. Yet, most respondents previously expressed their concern that the program may not be doing as good a job in providing long-term skills as entry-level. Thus, the respondents are skeptical about the program's ability to offer students training that will improve their long-range job prospects, although the respondents

think that the hope for such training should be a major reason for students to enroll in vocational education.

About two-thirds to three-fourths of each group thinks that the desires to improve earning potential and further one's education are very important reasons to enroll in vocational education. It is significant, therefore, that the respondents earlier expressed their confidence that the program generally succeeds in these areas.

**On the whole, then, the respondents believe that students are enrolling in vocational education for the right reasons and that the program generally delivers what the students should expect it to.**

**The respondents agree that students should not approach vocational education as a means of escaping academic requirements.**

Such possible reasons as seeking an easier program, an alternative to dropping out, a reduction of academic requirements, or mere credits for graduation receive means of only about 2.0 or less--an indication that the respondents regard such reasons as at best only somewhat important. Plus these reasons score low on all of the groups' scale of values.

**On the other hand, the respondents do not believe that a desire to improve math, science, and communications/language skills is a strong reason for choosing vocational education.** The rating of these items just above 2.0 gives them some credence, but they are certainly not regarded as highly as the pursuit of vocational training or even the opportunity for further education in general. Thus, the respondents do not equate vocational education with the development of these subject areas.

**The respondents are unanimous in rating parents the number one influence on a student's decision to enroll in vocational education. They also rate counselors and vocational education students as very important influences.**

**Table 13**

**People Influencing Decision to Enroll in Vocational Education**

	<u>Voc. Eds.</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Non-Voc. Eds.</u>
Administrators	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.2
Teachers	1.5	2.0	2.0	1.7
Counselors	1.4	1.7	2.0	1.3
Parents	(1.2)	1.5	1.7	(1.2)
Other family members		2.0	2.0	
Business, industry, and labor representatives	2.1	2.3	2.2	2.1
Vocational education students	1.3	1.9	1.9	1.5
Other students	1.5	NA	NA	1.7
Vocational education teachers and administrators	1.5	NA	NA	1.6
Friends and neighbors	NA	2.4	2.2	NA

1= Very Important, 2= Somewhat Important, 3= Not Important

The educators are the most convinced of the family's role: over three-fourths of each group thinks that parents and other family members are very important influences on a student's decision to enroll in vocational education, as compared with about half of the student and parent respondents. Still, all respondents recognize the predominant influence of the family.

Although the respondents agree that students already enrolled in vocational education are an important influence on students contemplating enrollment, the respondents disagree on the extent of that influence. While three-fourths of the vocational educators and one-half of the non-vocational educators believe that the vocational education students constitute a very important influence, only about a third of the student and parent respondents agree. Still, the

parents and students do acknowledge that vocational education students are at least somewhat important in helping a student decide to enroll in the program.

In addition, the educators see counselors as more important influences than the students and parents do. Two-thirds of the vocational educators and three-fourths of the non-vocational see counselors as very important influences, while only a third of the students and less than half of the parents share that opinion. Thus, although all respondents recognize the importance of counselors in shaping a students' decision to enroll in vocational education, the educators understandably place more importance on that influence.

**The respondents rate teachers at best a moderate influence, but the educators are more convinced of the role teachers play than are parents and students.** Means of 1.5 and 1.7 indicate that the two educator groups regard teachers as a fairly important influence. In fact, just over half (52 percent) of the vocational educators regard teachers as a very important influence. By contrast, the student and parent respondents rate teachers a flat 2.0--indicating that they see teachers as just somewhat important influences.

**The respondents also agree that administrators and business, industry, and labor representatives exert the least influence on a student's decision to enroll in vocational education.** In fact, about half of the students consider these individuals not important.

**Thus, it would appear that the most effective way to promote vocational education to potential candidates is through parents, counselors, and students currently enrolled in the program.**

**Both groups of educators believe that counselors, vocational education teachers and administrators, and teachers in general should be playing a more influential role than they are now. But they also think that parents and current vocational education students should continue to be influential.**

**Table 14**  
**Role People Should Play to Influence Students**

	<u>Vocational Educators</u>	<u>Non-Vocational Educators</u>
Administrators	1.7	1.8
Teachers	1.2	1.3
Counselors	1.1	1.1
Parents/family	1.1	1.1
Business, industry, and labor representatives	1.4	1.4
Vocational education students	1.2	1.5
Other students	1.7	1.9
Vocational education teachers and administrators	1.1	1.2

1= Very Important, 2= Somewhat Important, 3= Not Important

Almost all of the educators (95 percent of the vocational and 89 percent of the non-vocational) stress that counselors should play a very important role in a student's decision. However, only about two-thirds (66 percent) of the vocational educators and nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of the non-vocational think that counselors presently hold such an influential position. Even the counselors admit that they should be playing a more influential role: 74 percent of them think that they currently play a very important role, but nearly all of them (97 percent) think that they should be even more significant.

Similarly, 90 percent of the vocational educators and over three-fourths (78 percent) of the non-vocational believe that vocational education administrators and teachers should be more influential. However, just over half of each group thinks that these teachers and administrators are so influential now.

Along the same lines, 80 percent of the vocational educators and 67 per-

cent of the non-vocational believe that teachers in general could be very important influences. By contrast, just over half (52 percent) of the former group of respondents and over a third (39 percent) of the latter see teachers as playing such an important role now.

**Thus, the educators recognize that they and their colleagues, at all levels, should be taking a more active role in influencing young people who are potential vocational education candidates.**

Parents also should continue to play a highly important role, according to nearly 90 percent of the educators. But the two groups of educators don't quite agree on the relative importance of the role that could be assumed by current vocational education students: over three-fourths (79 percent) of the vocational educators envision a very important role for these students, while just over half (55 percent) of the non-vocational educators would agree.

**The educators believe that business, industry, and labor representatives could be assuming a more influential role in students' decisions about vocational education.** Although less than 20 percent of each group of respondents sees these representatives playing a very important role now, nearly two-thirds of each group believes that that role should be very important.

**The educators reveal that they generally recommend the average student to vocational education, but they do expect the potential candidate to possess above average manual dexterity and motivation.**

**Table 15**

**Characteristics for Recommending Students to Vocational Education**

	<u>Vocational Educators</u>	<u>Non-Vocational Educators</u>
Grade point average	3.0	3.0
Manual dexterity	2.6	2.6
Communications/language skills	2.9	3.2
Social adjustment	2.8	3.0
Math and science skills	3.0	3.2
Motivation	1.6	1.9

1 = Strong to 5 = Weak

On one hand, the preference for a student who possesses manual dexterity suggests that both groups of educators maintain this stereotyped notion of vocational education. On the other hand, the educators apparently do not see vocational education students as being unintelligent or exhibiting behavior problems, two stereotypes with which the field of vocational education has had to contend. It is also significant that these respondents believe that vocational education students should be highly motivated. Thus, the educators indicate that they have few preset notions as to which students are the best candidates for vocational education. Plus, the non-vocational educators are in relative accord with the vocational educators and thus do not necessarily see vocational students in a limited way.

Sources of Information

The respondents generally agree that counselors, teachers, and brochures are the best sources of information about vocational education. Still, none of these sources is rated very important (except that the counselors see themselves as a very important source, as indicated by a mean of 1.4). Thus, the respondents indicate that even these best sources are not en-

tirely adequate.

**Nevertheless, it is significant that teachers and counselors emerge as important sources of information, as well as highly influential in helping students to decide about vocational education.**

**Table 16**  
**Sources of Information**

	<u>Voc. Eds.</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Non-Voc. Eds.</u>	<u>Businesses</u>
Brochures/course descriptions	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8	2.2
Counselors	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.5	1.9
Administrators	2.1	NA	NA	2.0	NA
Teachers	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.8	2.0
Vocational education students	1.9	1.9	1.6	2.0	1.8
State government	2.1	NA	NA	2.3	NA
CEPD/Intermediate school district	2.0	NA	NA	2.0	NA
Local advisory committees	1.9	NA	NA	2.2	NA
Private industry council	NA	NA	NA	NA	2.4
Articles in the newspaper	1.8	2.3	2.4	2.0	2.2
Tv/radio spots	NA	2.4	2.5	NA	2.4
Son or daughter	NA	1.5	NA	NA	NA
Business, industry, and labor representatives	NA	2.2	2.1	NA	NA
Co-workers or employees	NA	2.4	NA	NA	2.3

1= Very Important, 2= Somewhat Important, 3= Not Important

**The business and student respondents place the most confidence in vocational education students.** The means of 1.8 and 1.6, respectively, indicate that these respondents place a fair amount of credence in the students as sources of information, but still the students are rated overall only somewhat important. Similarly, the educators recognize that the follow-up report of the graduates of vocational education has some merit as a source of information.

**The respondents place the media at or near the bottom of their lists as relatively unimportant sources of information about vocational education.** Only the two educator groups see some value in newspaper articles, as indicated by means of around 2.0. By contrast, the other three groups of respondents rate all media below 2.0--or not even somewhat important.

**The vocational educator respondents cite their own reading as the best source of information about both vocational education trends and marketing and recruitment.** In fact, almost three-fourths (70 percent) prefer their own reading for information on trends, and over half (53 percent) for information on marketing and recruitment. By contrast, just half (57 percent) relies heavily on professional associations, the second most important source, for information about trends, and just over a third (34 percent) considers the associations very important for marketing information.

**Table 17**  
**Vocational Educators' Sources of Information about Trends and Marketing and Recruitment**

	<u>Trends</u>	<u>Marketing and Recruitment</u>
State government	2.0	2.3
Professional associations	1.5	1.7
Colleagues	1.6	1.7
Media	1.9	1.9
Follow-up report of graduates of vocational education	1.9	2.0
CEPD/Intermediate school district	2.1	2.1
Business contacts	1.7	1.8
Own reading	1.3	1.5

1 = Very Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = Not Important

These respondents rate state government and the intermediate school districts as their least important sources of information about trends or marketing. Less than one-fourth of these respondents rate these sources very important for either type of information, although one might expect both sources to be more fruitful, especially for information about trends. Similarly, these respondents have already indicated that state government and the intermediate school district are not very important sources for information about vocational education in general. By contrast, the respondents find the media to be somewhat more important for information about both trends and marketing.

Thus, the vocational educator respondents suggest that the sources that could offer needed information about vocational education have not proven effective.

## Promotion of Vocational Education

The educator respondents claim that vocational education teachers, administrators, and students are currently the most effective promoters of the program, state government the least effective.

**Table 18**  
**Effective Promoters of Vocational Education**

	<u>Vocational Educators</u>	<u>Non-Vocational Educators</u>
Teachers	1.9	2.0
Administrators	2.1	2.0
Counselors	1.9	1.6
State government	2.3	2.3
CEPD/Intermediate school district	2.0	2.0
Business and industry	2.0	2.1
Vocational education students	1.5	1.7
Vocational education teachers and administrators	1.5	1.5

1= Very Effective, 2= Somewhat Effective, 3= Not Effective

Over half of each group of educators rate vocational education teachers and administrators very effective promoters of the program. In addition, over half (52 percent) of the vocational educators and over a third (39 percent) of the non-vocational say the same about students. These responses coincide with the respondents' previous assertion that the program's teachers, administrators, and students serve as fairly important influences on a student's decision to enroll in vocational education.

The non-vocational educators think more highly of counselors as promoters of the program than do the vocational educators. Over half

(51 percent) of the non-vocational educators find counselors very effective promoters, whereas just over a third (34 percent) of the vocational educators would agree. Similarly, the non-vocational educators previously indicated a stronger belief in the importance of the role counselors play in influencing a student to enroll in vocational education. It is noteworthy that the counselors have more faith in their effectiveness as promoters than do the other members of the vocational educator group: the counselors offer a mean of 1.5, and over half (59 percent) of them rate themselves very effective.

By contrast, over a third (37 percent) of the vocational educators and almost half (43 percent) of the non-vocational rate state government as not effective. This reaction corresponds with the earlier assessment of state government as a rather unimportant source of information.

**The educators think that all of the suggested individuals and institutions should be very important promoters of vocational education, but they don't find any of them very effective now.**

**Table 19**  
**Potentially Important Promoters of Vocational Education**

	<u>Vocational Educators</u>	<u>Non-Vocational Educators</u>
Teachers	1.1	1.3
Administrators	1.2	1.4
Counselors	1.0	1.1
State government	1.4	1.5
CEPD/Intermediate school district	1.3	1.4
Business and industry	1.2	1.2
Vocational education students	1.2	1.3
Vocational education teachers and administrators	1.0	1.1

1= Very Important, 2= Somewhat Important, 3= Not Important

**Counselors and vocational education teachers and administrators are rated the highest as potentially important promoters.** Almost all respondents from both groups of educators (over 90 percent) rate them very important. Yet, the educator respondents have already indicated that their colleagues are not that effective as promoters now.

**Particularly significant is the high rating of business and industry as potentially important promoters.** Three-fourths of the vocational educators and nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of the non-vocational believe that business and industry could be very important in promotion but are viewed as only somewhat effective now. Similarly, these respondents earlier indicated that business, labor, and industry representatives should play a very important role in influencing young people to enroll in vocational education. Thus, the educator respondents see the potential for an expanded role for busi-

ness and industry in the development of the program.

### Familiarity with Vocational Education

The parent and business respondents demonstrate the greatest familiarity with high school vocational programs, but they are generally not very familiar with any vocational program.

**Table 20**  
**Familiarity with Vocational Education**

	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Business</u>
High school programs	1.5	1.8
Area vocational education centers	1.7	2.0
Community college programs	2.1	2.2
University/college programs	2.4	2.4
Private vocational training schools	2.5	2.5

1= Very Familiar, 2= Somewhat Familiar, 3= Not Familiar

Almost half (48 percent) of the parent and a third of the business respondents are very familiar with the high school programs. By contrast, the area vocational centers, the second most recognized, are very familiar only to 40 percent of the parent and one-fourth of the business respondents. These respondents are also only moderately familiar with the other vocational programs.

It is not surprising that the business respondents should be most familiar with the high school programs since, of the 51 percent who have hired vocational education graduates, the majority (58 percent) have hired them from high schools. By contrast, area vocational centers have been the source of employees for less than half (45 percent). The other programs have supplied graduates to one-fourth or fewer of

the business respondents who have hired vocational education graduates.

### Role of State Government

The vocational educators believe that state government is most important for funding vocational education and less important for providing training, materials, and general promotion of the program.

**Table 21**

#### **Role of State Government**

Funding vocational education administrators	1.5
Funding high demand programs	1.4
Funding purchase of equipment	1.3
Training teachers and administrators	1.8
Providing curriculum materials	1.7
Enhancing the image of vocational education	1.6

1= Very Important, 2= Somewhat Important, 3= Not Important

Three-fourths of the vocational educator respondents believe that state government is very important for funding the purchase of equipment. Two-thirds feels the same about the funding of high demand programs. By contrast, the other roles of state government are rated very important by one-third to one-half of these respondents.

Particularly noteworthy is the rating of state government as only moderately important in enhancing the image of vocational education, yet these respondents have previously indicated that state government should be a fairly important promoter of the program.